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Clandestine Radio Propaganda Operations against Germany during the  
Munich Crisis and after**

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*Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, No. 3. (Jul., 1984), pp. 357-384.

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*Journal of Contemporary History* is currently published by Sage Publications, Ltd..

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Nicholas Pronay and Philip M. Taylor

**'An Improper Use of Broadcasting . . .'  
The British Government and Clandestine  
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Germany during the Munich Crisis and After**

**During the most critical days** of the Munich Crisis, 26-30 September 1938, when peace or war hung in the balance, a clandestine 'political warfare' operation was carried out on the direct authority of Neville Chamberlain. It provides a hitherto untold story about the Munich Crisis. It also helps to shed some light on several somewhat mysterious aspects of the gradually emerging story of the Chamberlain government's surprisingly extensive and adroit use of media manipulation and other propaganda techniques in both domestic and international politics<sup>1</sup> — an accomplishment which has until recently been assumed to have belonged only to the more 'modern' regimes of nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. One reason why this story, and much of the background to it, remained unknown for so long is that the government understood surprisingly well how important it was for the success of 'informing the public' that it should be unaware of the source of that 'information'. Hence many of these exercises in what Mr. Baldwin preferred to call the 'education of the public' were in fact conducted through various branches of the Secret Services. This story, amongst other things, emphasizes the basic inseparability of the spheres of 'intelligence' and 'information' in the modern state. We owe our knowledge of this particular story to a memorandum by Gerald Wellesley<sup>2</sup> which found its way into the Additional Papers still being gathered as part of the Chamberlain Archive at the University of Birmingham.

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We are indebted to Professor J.A.S. Grenville for drawing our attention to this document, and for his generous advice and help. We are also grateful to Dr. B.S. Benedikz of Birmingham University Library for information concerning the provenance and background of the Wellesley memorandum, and for permission to quote from the Chamberlain Papers.

*Journal of Contemporary History* (SAGE, London, Beverly Hills and New Delhi),  
Vol. 19 (1984), 357-384

The actual story, as recorded by Wellesley, goes as follows. On the afternoon of Monday, 26 September — the day when General Gamelin, the French Chief of Staff, flew to London to join Daladier and Bonnet in crisis discussions in the wake of Hitler's Godesberg 'ultimatum' (which both the British and the French cabinet felt impelled to reject), and the day after ARP was mobilized and the evacuation of children ordered — Gerald Wellesley telephoned Sir Joseph Ball 'with a view to placing the services of Wireless Publicity Ltd. and the Luxembourg Broadcasting Station at the disposal of HM Government'. A meeting took place between them the following afternoon. Sir Joseph told Wellesley that 'information received from Germany indicated not only considerable discontent and unrest in that country, but also complete ignorance as to the true state of affairs, in particular the attitude of Great Britain and France. It was agreed that any steps taken to inform the German public of such matters, might prove of vital importance.'

Sir Joseph asked whether it would be possible to arrange for Radio Luxembourg to broadcast, in German, 'such messages as Mr. Chamberlain's statement [published that morning] and Mr. Roosevelt's appeal to Herr Hitler, of which he believed the German public were in complete ignorance'. He was assured that 'so far as our London organization was concerned, this could be done at a moment's notice', though he was warned that the 'Station itself is under the control of a French director who might require the authority of certain Officials of the Grand Duchy before the broadcasts could be made'. Sir Joseph 'should immediately get in touch with Paris by telephone' to arrange for the 'necessary pressure' to be brought by the French members of the Board of the *Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion*. Sir Joseph mentioned that similar broadcasts by the BBC were envisaged, but that the matter was still under consideration. 'In reply, [Wellesley] pointed out that the Luxembourg Station was in an entirely different position. In Germany 8½ million wireless sets (out of a national total of 9 million) are "Volks Empfänger", i.e. "peoples [sic] sets", supplied by the government, and are incapable of receiving any but local broadcasts. Having regard to this, the Luxembourg Station, being only 10 miles from the German frontier, was exceedingly well placed.' He also 'pointed out that since Luxembourg normally operates a daily news service in both French and German, it would not necessarily seem a very unusual departure if that service were to be developed [sic] on the lines under consideration'.

Sir Joseph asked for preparations to be made for commencing the broadcasts 'immediately the scheme had been officially approved in London, explaining that no final decision could be taken until the return from Germany of Sir Horace Wilson, who was due back that evening'. Sir Joseph concluded the meeting by pointing out that 'the whole business of the Station, and even its existence, might be jeopardised by the steps we were preparing to take'.

After the meeting, the manager of Wireless Publicity Ltd. was told by Wellesley to arrange for staff to be on duty throughout the night and for the 'company' plane to be ready to leave for Luxembourg at any moment', and *Wellesley* 'got into telephonic communication with Paris and arranged for the necessary representations to be made to the Luxembourg Director. By 7 p.m. it was confirmed to [him] that this had been done.' Fifteen minutes later Sir Joseph telephoned to say that the 'proposals had been approved' and asked, with barely three-quarters of an hour left, for the setting-up of 'a direct relay from Luxembourg of the broadcast which Mr. Chamberlain was due to make at 8 p.m.'. With five minutes to spare, the Post Office and the BBC succeeded in completing the connection with Luxembourg, for the first time ever — an impressive engineering feat as well as an extraordinary reversal of policy, as we shall see, and 'Mr. Chamberlain's speech was duly relayed commencing at 8 p.m.'.

During the night, translations were made of six 'messages': Roosevelt's appeal; Chamberlain's, Daladier's and President Benes' replies to it; Chamberlain's message to Hitler of 1 a.m., 27 September, and a summary of Chamberlain's broadcast to the nation in the evening of that day. The translations were then recorded on discs and at 7.45 a.m. the company's 'plane took off with them for Luxembourg. Radio Luxembourg broadcast these recordings at intervals throughout the day. During the morning of that day, Black Wednesday, 28 September, as mobilization proceeded and anti-aircraft guns were being set up in the parks of London, Roosevelt's second appeal, which had only been received that morning, was translated, recorded and actually went out on the air at 2 p.m. that afternoon, to be repeated at intervals thereafter. On Wednesday night, between 9 p.m. and 2 a.m., a German translation of Chamberlain's House of Commons speech was prepared, recorded and put on the 'plane to Luxembourg by 5.45 a.m. On Thursday, all these recordings were broadcast at frequent intervals, throughout the day, by Radio Luxembourg. When news

of the signing of the Munich Agreement arrived, 'On Friday morning I gave instructions for the German broadcasts to be discontinued'.

There is no other account of this remarkable episode in Anglo-German relations, but that it took place is confirmed by subsequent references to it in the documents recording the post-Munich development of British attempts to appeal directly to the German people. There is no reason, therefore, to doubt that this is indeed an accurate report of what occurred during those critical days of the Munich Crisis.

Whatever the effectiveness of the operation on German public opinion might have been, it was an amazingly risky step for the British government to take. Hitler's sensitivity to any form of propaganda against him and strong objections even to what was written in British newspapers about him and German policy, no less than his total unwillingness to accept that opinions expressed in them need not represent the views of the British government, was only too fully realized in London. As Professor Adamthwaite has recently shown, the government fell over backwards to try and make newspapers moderate their tone with regard to Germany, and abstain from putting forward ideas for a less conciliatory policy towards that country. When Lord Halifax visited Berlin in November 1937, he listened to protests from Goebbels about 'attacks upon Hitler in the British Press and of unfriendly reporting from British correspondents in Berlin', to which Halifax chose to respond by promising 'to do all he could to secure the "cooperation of the British Press"'.<sup>3</sup> On his return, he launched himself with vigour into a campaign of bringing pressure on the press which ran very close to, if not well beyond the limits of constitutional propriety. As far as the medium of radio was concerned, the BBC was told to 'bear in mind the extreme sensitiveness of both Hitler and Mussolini . . . to "talks" and presentation of news'.<sup>4</sup> When the Czechoslovak crisis broke in September 1938, the government clamped such a comprehensive censorship on the BBC, to avoid upsetting what they took to be an unstable mind liable to fly into destructive rages, that even Children's Hour talks about world affairs were checked, indeed cancelled, at the request of the Foreign Office.<sup>5</sup> Given these perceptions of Hitler's sensitivity even to domestic broadcasting, it is nothing short of amazing that Chamberlain chose to sanction the beaming of British propaganda directly into Germany — on wavelengths designed for reception by

radio-sets specially manufactured by the German government to prevent the reception of foreign stations. It was by any standard an overtly 'unfriendly' act towards another government, and particularly so in the middle of negotiations at the highest level, with Britain playing the role of honest broker. There could also be no doubt that the nazi government regarded the direct beaming of propaganda into its own territory as a *hostile* act, and the cessation of which as the prerequisite of any treaty of friendship, as for example, in the case of the German-Polish Treaty of Non-Aggression in 1934. Clauses to this effect were written into the Agreement for normalizing relations with Austria in 1936, for example.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, when Chamberlain authorized the direct beaming into Germany of propaganda, in German, of a kind designed to drive a wedge between *Volk* and *Führer*, he authorized an act which provided the nazis, should they have chosen to use it, with the ammunition with which to create an international *cause célèbre*, amidst shouts of 'perfidie Albion' and English bad faith.

Moreover, there was the distinct possibility that in this case international law would have sided with the Germans. In May 1933, the Council of the International Broadcasting Union, of which Britain as well as Germany was a member, passed a resolution — proposed and drafted by the British! — which stated:<sup>7</sup>

The Council ... holds that the systematic diffusion of programmes or communications which are specially intended for listeners in another country ... constitutes an inadmissible act from the point of view of good international relations. It calls upon all members of the International Broadcasting Union to avoid such transmissions, which constitute an improper use of broadcasting.

In March 1936, after extensive debate, the League of Nations passed the *Convention on the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace*.<sup>8</sup> It specifically outlawed the transmission of broadcast propaganda designed 'to incite the population of any territory to acts incompatible with the internal order or the security of a territory of a High Contracting Partner'. Although Germany had not been a signatory to this Convention, having withdrawn from the League for the time being, Britain was.<sup>9</sup>

There was another even more risky dimension to this operation. A further potential danger lay in the political and propaganda opportunities which it might have presented to Hitler, should he have decided to break off his negotiations with Chamberlain on a suitable pretext. He could have claimed that Chamberlain had

betrayed his good faith or that Germany was again being treated as an inferior against whom the British and the French still felt free to commit acts of humiliation or aggression. Furthermore, the operation could have revived all the barely dormant memories of Britain's wartime propaganda emanating from Lord Northcliffe's 'Ministry of Lies', touching upon the still sensitive areas concerning Britain's propaganda not only in Germany but also in the USA. There was, in addition, the ultimate risk that Hitler would react with all the word power of his own propaganda ministry, which would have had the most serious political repercussions for British foreign policy in general and for the policy of appeasement in particular. Chamberlain's own posture as 'the man of peace' would have been seriously undermined as, indeed, might have his own parliamentary position. In fact, Chamberlain was fully aware of all this. A little while later, when talking about this operation, he remarked to Wellesley, 'I do not know what this did to the Germans, but by God it frightened me'.<sup>10</sup>

How did such a sensitive and potentially explosive operation come to be carried out? During the 1930s, the British government was gradually reconciling itself to the use of propaganda as an instrument of peacetime diplomacy. Although, invariably, British activity in this direction was limited to counter-measures provoked by hostile foreign propaganda, the type of propaganda conducted by, for example, the British Council (founded in 1934) was ostensibly of a fundamentally different character from that conducted by the dictatorships. It was not 'propaganda', properly so-called, British officials reassured the public, it was 'national projection', pro-British rather than anti-foreign. However, in reality, the difference between British 'self-advertisement' and aggressive foreign propaganda was much slighter than was publicly admitted. It might have been pro-British rather than anti-foreign but, as the Foreign Office admitted during its dispute with the BBC over the nature of the foreign language broadcasts initiated in January 1938, the type of propaganda transmissions it had in mind for Middle Eastern audiences in answer to Radio Bari 'was hardly suitable for the BBC'.<sup>11</sup> Financial and, if to a lesser degree, political arguments militated against the Foreign Office's desire to construct its own broadcasting stations overseas and, as a result, a gentleman's agreement was worked out with the BBC, which assumed responsibility for the broadcasts from Britain, with the Foreign Office exercising considerable control over their content.

The Arabic Service was followed in March 1938 by broadcasts in Spanish and Portuguese for South America and, in September, by the European service with news bulletins in French, German and Italian.

This general story of the BBC's foreign language broadcasts is well-known.<sup>12</sup> However, what is not concerns the use of foreign radio stations to transmit additional material in German. The Cabinet Committee, which had been set up in the autumn of 1937 under the chairmanship of Sir Kingsley Wood to consider foreign language broadcasts, did not disband once they were entrusted to the BBC. It was reconstituted in June 1938 under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Inskip, the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, to examine the defence aspects of broadcasting and to consider a memorandum by the Postmaster General on 'Advertisement Broadcasting', which had been submitted to the Cabinet on 22 June.<sup>13</sup> Also, early in 1938, certain commercial concerns urged the government to reconsider its position in respect of advertisements on radio. They argued that such sponsored broadcasts could provide 'a welcome aid to commerce' and would serve to present 'a wider diffusion of British culture'. The Cabinet passed this question also over to the reconstituted Committee on Overseas Broadcasting which, 'owing to pressure of more urgent business' — i.e. the negotiating of a complex agreement with Reuters to increase the supply of British news abroad — postponed discussing the matter until early 1939.<sup>14</sup>

In the meantime, the international crisis over Czechoslovakia prompted more urgent action. On 5 September 1938, Stephen King-Hall, the distinguished publicist and expert on international affairs, wrote:<sup>15</sup>

I have recently received a good deal of reliable information from Germany and there is no doubt that the home front is shaky . . . I am convinced that a moment might arrive when the whole situation might be saved by an immediate and nation-wide appeal to the German nation.

King-Hall had in fact been studying morale in Germany for the planners of the Ministry of Information, who had begun work in 1935 but whose preparations were far from complete at the time of the Czechoslovak crisis. There was thus a very real danger, as King-Hall warned, that 'if the crisis gets worse, we may be caught with our trousers down so far as our work is concerned'.<sup>16</sup>



Rapid improvisation was called for. Working in conjunction with the Foreign Office, the planners of the Ministry of Information began to arrange with the Stationery Office and the Air Ministry for the publication and aerial distribution of propaganda leaflets. But this was a course of action which could only be taken once war had actually broken out; there remained an urgent need to increase the supply of British news and views to totalitarian Germany while peace prevailed. Radio provided the best opportunity for such a task. It was immediate, direct and difficult to prevent. As the crisis threatened to degenerate into war, following Chamberlain's return from Godesberg, the BBC had, on 24 September, begun to initiate its own arrangements for transmissions in German. Three days later, the Foreign Office informed the BBC that a translation of the Prime Minister's speech on the crisis would be required and, at very short notice, the speech was broadcast in German, French and Italian on the medium wave — at the expense of many regional programmes in the Home Service.<sup>17</sup> On the following day, the Foreign Office asked the BBC to continue the broadcasts.

Transmitting on the domestic wavelengths allocated to Britain, even if in German, was, however, one thing and infiltrating propaganda into Radio Luxembourg's wavelengths to be beamed by one of the most powerful transmitters in Europe, a bare ten miles from the German border, quite another. This was 'black propaganda' or to give it its proper name 'political warfare', as the preferred British term had it in the second world war, or 'psychological warfare' as the rest of the world officially termed it. The distinction between the two was well understood and was expressed in the deliberate organizational separation of the bodies concerned with planning the 'Ministry of *Information*' and those planning 'enemy propaganda' — as it had been called since the first world war — renamed 'political warfare' in 1940.

As far as we know, there were three such contingent organizations officially in being by September 1938.<sup>18</sup> These were the Ministry of Information itself, which was supposed to be in charge of all forms of propaganda from 'information' to 'enemy propaganda' in the original plans, the Secret Services' Section D, which was to develop methods of subversion both physical and psychological ('moral sabotage') and the Foreign Office's own, which went through several names, finally to emerge as the Political Warfare Executive. Both of the latter seem to have come into existence only in the wake of the Anschluss in 1938, partly as a result of the dissatisfaction felt

with the lack of progress and purpose shown by the planners of the Ministry of Information and partly because of the growing recognition that it was essential to separate the people who were to develop overt or 'information' propaganda, that is output which officially represents the word of the government and which therefore needs to be 'truthful' in the sense of being factually accurate to maintain credibility, and those concerned with covert propaganda, which seeks to achieve immediate results by whatever means and where the essential requirement, apart from effectiveness, is that it should not be traceable back to His Majesty's Government. There is no mention of the intention to use Radio Luxembourg amongst the records of either of the organizations which had been formally established for propaganda purposes since planning for the contingency of war began in 1935.

This fact may help to explain why Wellesley should have taken the initiative and proposed the use of Wireless Publicity Ltd., and through it the use of Radio Luxembourg, to the Prime Minister through Sir Joseph Ball, rather than that this should have come about the other way. After the Munich Crisis, when the lessons of the dry-run mobilization of the propaganda agencies, alongside the other war-contingency organizations, came to be analysed and planning put onto a much more purposive footing, Radio Luxembourg was listed at the top of Section D's plans<sup>19</sup> and, as we shall see, came high on the list of priorities for many others, including the Prime Minister. The use of Radio Luxembourg covertly to beam propaganda into Germany during the Crisis seems therefore, at first sight, to have been the result of a typically British reliance on private initiative and quick improvisation in a moment of crisis to make up for the lack of systematic planning before it broke. But if so, how was Gerald Wellesley, soon to succeed as the Seventh Duke of Wellington, with no apparent connections with Radio Luxembourg or with broadcasting in any form, in a position to be able to put such an operation into effect 'at a moment's notice'? How could he get Radio Luxembourg to broadcast the material *and* be able to have it prepared in London so quickly and efficiently — and without evidently letting the cat out of the bag?

For an answer we need to look to the fascinating, though little-known history of Radio Luxembourg and Britain's, and the BBC's, relationship to it.<sup>20</sup> In the 1920s when the technology of wireless transmission first reached the stage of practical application, the French government viewed this new invention as simply a new tech-

nology for publishing, rather than looking at it in a totalitarian frame of mind as a means of propagandizing, or 'educating', the population. Hence the French — like the Americans and unlike the British<sup>21</sup> — regarded publication in this new medium as a part of the constitutional right of every citizen, just as he had the right to print whatever he wished, subject only to the laws of libel, etc. But, unlike the USA, in France there was also a tradition according to which the government possessed the same liberty to get its views conveyed to the public by whatever means seemed the most effective. The French government, therefore, had no objection to the establishment of local broadcasting stations, financed by whatever means might be found by those wishing to do so — and also proceeded to establish a national radio network, which put out the government viewpoint, without any pretence to fine distinctions between 'the voice of France' and the voice of the French government of the day. A number of local broadcasting stations did in fact come into being. Some of these, such as that at Fécamp in Normandy, lay close enough to the Channel for a substantial area of southern England to be able to pick up their broadcasts. One Captain Leonard Plugge<sup>22</sup> — wealthy Englishman, socially well-connected, a cross between a playboy-sportsman-buccaneer and a dilettante electrical experimenter — hit upon the idea of renting this transmitter after it had closed down for the night from midnight to 3 a.m., and broadcasting popular dance-music interspersed with entertaining chat in English and, of course, with advertisements by British firms. Starting in 1931, the idea flourished and he soon extended his operations from Radio Normandy to Radio Toulouse, Radio Lyon, Radio Paris and Poste Parisienne, running the whole show through a grandly named International Broadcasting Company. The BBC was, naturally, furious because the policy of compulsory 'education' required, as Sir John Reith put it, 'the brute force of monopoly'. If the public had an alternative to tune to, then its careful 'programming policy' of feeding the public with a diet of serious programmes, sweetened with some concessions to popular taste, would fail to work. People would turn the knob when the uplift came.

But these stations, limited in power and confined to the late hours, were nothing compared to what was being built in Luxembourg. Here a band of radio enthusiasts, largely Belgian, obtained a concession from the Grand Duke to start a broadcasting service, which initially was meant to be an all-round service providing

cultural and educational programmes as well.<sup>23</sup> The station was, however, to be financed by advertising. To raise the requisite capital for building it, a rather shady group of entrepreneurs moved in and converted the concession from local station into a high-powered transmitter designed to cover an area bounded by the Alps in the south, Prague in the east, Biscay in the west — and Scotland in the north.<sup>24</sup> Captain Plugge was to sell its advertising space in England and arrange for suitable records/shows for its British listeners. As soon as news of the building of Radio Luxembourg reached Britain, the government, egged on by the BBC and its foster-parent the Postmaster General, began a massive campaign for throttling it. The International Broadcasting Union, a BBC foundation, refused to allocate it a suitable long-wave frequency — the ‘pirates’ simply seized one as a result — and passed resolutions calling upon their parent governments to take action, including the resolution quoted earlier denouncing broadcasting in other nations’ languages. Early approaches for technical assistance and later for co-operation with Britain and the BBC were rebuffed.<sup>25</sup> The British Ambassador in Belgium, whose brief included the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, made regular protestations to its government, which were met with evasion. The Grand Duke was mindful of the large tax-revenue promised by the Station and was attracted by the idea of Luxembourg becoming a household name on the airwaves alongside London and Paris.

By contrast, the French government looked on the fledgling station through the eyes of its propagandists and determined not so much to kill it — which it could have achieved, unlike Britain — but to gain effective, though secret control of it. In typically French manner, this manoeuvre, in which Pierre Laval was involved, included the granting of the Légion d’Honneur to one Raoul Fernandez, a citizen of Luxembourg and one of the shady entrepreneurs behind the Société d’Etudes Radiophoniques SA which gained the original concession for, as the magazine *Wireless World* indignantly reported, ‘bringing the Company in Luxembourg entirely under French control’.<sup>26</sup> The French realised that such a station was eventually bound to broadcast not only music and shows, but news bulletins as well. Without investing the vast sums involved in building up a news organization, it would be bound to want to buy a news service ready-made from an agency. Not surprisingly, that agency for Radio Luxembourg became Havas,<sup>27</sup> rather than Reuters of Wolffe. The BBC kept on pressing the

government for continued action against Radio Luxembourg long after it became an established fact, and to support its case for taking action, it monitored Radio Luxembourg's broadcasts and presented, year after year, the results, showing the build-up of a vast European and British audience. By 1938, Radio Luxembourg reached peak audience figures of four million in Britain alone, which came close to 50 per cent of comparable BBC audience figures.<sup>28</sup>

British policy towards commercially based overseas broadcasting stations, pioneered by Captain Plugge, had been sadly misguided. In the first half of the 1930s, Sir John Reith was regarded as the government's expert advisor on matters of broadcasting and there was a failure to recognize Reith's limitations when it came to matters where his mind was shielded from practicalities by his ethical convictions. By carrying out a futile crusade against Radio Luxembourg in support of the ideals articulated by Sir John Reith and which in the last resort were politically as naive as he was himself, by consistently refusing technical co-operation and even denying permission to provide a land-line connection, the Foreign Office of Sir John Simon missed a great opportunity: the Luxembourg station which came on full power in January 1934 was indeed one of the most powerful and most universally receivable in Europe and, with its vast potential for propaganda, it had been handed to the French on a plate.

But at another level, saner minds in Britain began to look at the implications of the monitoring reports still produced with single-minded dedication by the BBC. One such was Isidore Ostrer, the head of Gaumont British News, the great film-and-newsreel studio complex. He had been the most skilful and clear-minded manipulator of the propaganda potential of the newsreel, putting it at the service of the National Government by a formal, though of course, secret agreement with Ramsay Macdonald in 1935.<sup>29</sup> Working closely with Sir Joseph Ball, successively head of the Conservative Party's Information Department, Director of the Research Department and of the National Publicity Bureau of the 'National' government, Gaumont British News consistently played the most effective propaganda role in selling the policies of the government, especially in respect of rearmament and the projection of both Baldwin and Chamberlain. In 1934, Ostrer, in defiance of the ban on press-advertisements for Radio Luxembourg — one of the Pyrrhic victories of the BBC/Post Office campaign — decided to

allow advertising in his own newspaper, the *Sunday Referee*,<sup>30</sup> which, incidentally, he had also 'placed behind the National Government'. Furthermore, his studios began to provide recordings for Radio Luxembourg of British variety shows and other programmes, bringing some of the actual production work for the station to Britain for the first time. Then in February 1936, the accession of King Edward VIII focused government attention on the propaganda potential of Radio Luxembourg. It was thought that it would be a good idea to transmit through Radio Luxembourg the King's speech, as it would give it a much wider circulation in Europe than the BBC could provide. The Postmaster General was instructed by the Cabinet to seek the advice of the BBC and if it was in the affirmative, to agree to the establishment of a landline to Luxembourg. The BBC objected and the project was dropped.<sup>31</sup> But attention having been focused on the matter, realistic new steps were now taken to remedy the consequences of a blindly antagonistic policy towards this powerful voice.

In March 1936, it was suddenly announced that a new company, called Wireless Publicity Ltd., had taken over from Captain Plugge's International Broadcasting Company the handling of Radio Luxembourg's business in England. The changeover was handled in an odd and secretive manner.<sup>32</sup> Captain Plugge was given no notice nor reasons — he subsequently sued for breach of contract but lost<sup>33</sup> — and the terms and personnel of the English service were suddenly and completely changed. Wireless Publicity Ltd. installed its own presenter in Luxembourg and henceforth it was a condition of the contracts signed by advertisers that: 1) the scripts of the programmes they sponsored were to be edited by Wireless Publicity Ltd., 2) the programmes were to be made up in Britain and, 3) Wireless Publicity Ltd. was to arrange for the preparation of all broadcast material sponsored by British firms.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, it was intimated that government disapproval of British firms sponsoring programmes had somehow vanished. Until then, such expenditure was regarded as legally being in an anomalous position and thus no formal advertising rates were published and no statement ever issued of how much money firms might have spent on sponsoring programmes. International Broadcasting Company was registered off-shore, publishing no accounts. Wireless Publicity Ltd., a British-registered company, now published formal rates and contracts and yet evidently remained unmolested.<sup>35</sup> In addition, a large access of cash seemed to

materialize with which J. Walter Thompson, the advertising agency, built what was soon reputed to be the most sophisticated recording studio in Europe, in which it produced, under the editorial direction of Wireless Publicity Ltd., an ever-increasing flow of notably more sophisticated and successful popular programmes, capitalizing on the wealth of talent of the English musical stage and on the appeal of British dance-music everywhere. As the *Advertisers Weekly* noted at the beginning of 1937, there were more stars appearing every Sunday on Radio Luxembourg than in a whole week of BBC programming.<sup>36</sup> Alongside the revitalized British popular film industry — with surreptitious government backing — Radio Luxembourg now began to be a useful part of British ‘cultural propaganda’, supplementing the more high-brow work of the British Council. By 1938 — after a request request for technical co-operation had once again been turned down, in 1936, by the BBC — Radio Luxembourg succeeded in mastering the new technology of shortwave transmission and in June 1938 it began its ‘World Service’.<sup>37</sup> English language- and English dance-music-based programmes swept all before them in popularity. Furthermore, although dance-music and variety were the fare most advertisers provided for attracting listeners to hear about the products they wished to sell, it was up to the customer to choose what he wished to have broadcast during the time which he bought at a rate of £400 an hour (plus the costs of making the programme, payable to Wireless Publicity Ltd., including even the fee of the disc-jockey/presenter). The *British Travel Association* — in practice by then a branch of the government-funded cultural propaganda organizations created in the early 1930s — was one customer which seemed to have different taste. Through Wireless Publicity Ltd., it bought airtime to broadcast talks *in French* about British cultural achievements, by such well-known, high-brow figures in the French-speaking world of Eastern Europe as Jean Cocteau and André Maurois.<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, Wireless Publicity Ltd. had done the nation an important service in repairing some of the damage caused by the silly policy of opposition ‘tooth and nail’, as Admiral Carpentdale of the BBC had put it, which had allowed Radio Luxembourg to fall under French financial and, therefore, French news control. But who were ‘Wireless Publicity Ltd.’? Ostensibly it was a private company registered in March 1936, substantially owned by another private company, with which it shared a common address. Its address and parent company help to explain its sterling work for the national interest both before and during the Munich Crisis. Wireless Publicity Ltd. was located in

Electra House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2. Electra House was no ordinary commercial building. It housed a group of those semi-secret organizations which provided Britain's background strength behind the rather feeble 'official' bodies concerned with the building-up of propaganda and subversive operations needed for a modern war. Wireless Publicity Ltd. was a subsidiary of the principal tenant of Electra House — Cable and Wireless Ltd. Officially a private firm, government ownership of which was not admitted until the 1960s, Cable and Wireless Ltd. was in fact in charge of maintaining the 'Red Network', the undersea strategic cable-communications system of the Empire — since 1909 also a network of wireless stations — which had been built up originally by the Colonial Defence Committee.<sup>39</sup> The other main tenant of Electra House was the political counterpart of Cable and Wireless Ltd., also in a semi-official form, the Imperial Communications Committee (renamed 'Commonwealth Communications Council' after 1933). Both Cable and Wireless Ltd. and the Imperial Communications Committee were effectively presided over by Sir Campbell Stuart for the whole of the interwar period. Sir Campbell Stuart had been Deputy Director of the Department of Enemy Propaganda under Northcliffe in the first world war and once war preparations began in earnest, he was the man summoned by Chamberlain to take charge of enemy propaganda again. In a real sense, of course, he never altogether ceased to be involved in the business. Unsurprisingly, when the Foreign Office decided in 1938 to establish a secret propaganda department, from which grew the Political Warfare Executive, it chose Electra House as the appropriate location for it — hence its code-name Department 'EH' — and the code-name for the integrated organization afterwards 'CS', i.e. Campbell Stuart.<sup>40</sup>

Cable and Wireless Ltd. acted as a technical department and front-organization for signal-intelligence and as such was closely involved with the work of both MI6 and MI7(b). The latter had been established in 1916 as the propaganda production (as distinct from censorship) department of the War Office under the Director of Military Intelligence, its brief specifically including the 'compilation and distribution of propaganda by cables and by wireless' and which had been housed in neighbouring Adastral House.<sup>41</sup> Wireless Publicity Ltd. remained a subsidiary of Cable and Wireless Ltd. until after the second world war, when the position of Radio Luxembourg had changed and there was no further need for using it



in this way. It was bought by Radio Luxembourg itself, and duly moved out of Electra House to Jermyn Street.<sup>42</sup> There is also some mystery surrounding those extremely modern and sophisticated broadcasting studios which were built after Wireless Publicity Ltd. took over the handling of Radio Luxembourg's affairs in Britain: did they belong to J. Walter Thompson or Wireless Publicity Ltd.? And who paid for them? It is most unlikely that it would have been J. Walter Thompson, for why should they sink their money into recording studios for whatever work the continental stations might need, when there was ample spare recording capacity amongst London's film companies for any kind of recording work, let alone the simple needs of disc-jockey chat-shows. But they were certainly not unemployed after the outbreak of war when Radio Luxembourg closed down; in fact their address became known the world over: Bush House, Aldwych, WC2.

Common location, however, did not mean co-ordination, any more than being an 'official' agency entailed being part of a cohesive plan. In fact, one of the deplorable facts disclosed in the post-mortem which followed the dry-run mobilization of September 1938, was the total lack of co-ordination among the three 'official' agencies engaged in planning for the hearts-and-minds aspects of war. The Ministry of Information, Section D and 'EH' learned of each other's work, and, as far as the documentation seems to imply, even of each other's existence, only after the Munich Crisis, and a series of meetings were arranged to co-ordinate their activities, culminating in the establishment of a Joint Broadcasting Committee after the Crisis was over.<sup>43</sup> It seems that even this belated co-ordination did not include MI7(b), or what was left of it, for at the beginning of the war it recruited its own staff, headed by John Baker White, to conduct radio propaganda, only to be 'discovered' and, after a row, transferred to the Ministry of Information at the end of 1940.<sup>44</sup> Whether the fact that neither the Political Warfare Executive nor the Ministry of Information appeared to know of the Luxembourg episode at the time indicates that Wireless Publicity Ltd. was connected to MI6 or MI7 under the War Office is impossible to tell. We are equally in the dark as to what Wellesley's own position was in respect of Wireless Publicity Ltd., which allowed him both to offer its services to the government and to 'give instructions for the German broadcasts to be discontinued'. Gerald Wellesley had joined the Foreign Office in 1908 and served in it all through the war where, incidentally, he became Harold Nicolson's

'oldest' and 'dear friend'.<sup>45</sup> Having attained the rank of Second Secretary, he retired from the Foreign Office in 1919. From then until 1939, he appears to have had no official position, reappearing in 1939 as 'Second Lieutenant and acting Lieutenant Colonel' of the Grenadier Guards, serving subsequently in France, Egypt and Italy, until succeeding his uncle to the Dukedom forced his retirement to more honorific offices. He was a learned, cultured and wealthy man who wrote and edited several books in the 1930s and became Surveyor of the King's Works of Art and a most unlikely associate, on all accounts, of the low-brow crowd of Radio Luxembourg and J. Walter Thompson. It is difficult to account for his involvement with them on grounds other than of duty — but in what capacity we do not know.

There is, on the other hand, a good deal more known about Sir Joseph Ball, which helps to explain the quite extraordinary fact that as far as Wellesley was concerned, Sir Joseph's word was all he had for launching such an immensely risky operation, the diplomatic consequences of which he, as a former Foreign Office man, was particularly well qualified to understand. For Sir Joseph Ball held no public office of any kind at the time. He was Director of the Research Department of Conservative Central Office and Deputy Chairman of the National Publicity Bureau, the publicity organization of the so-called National Government. Those posts scarcely qualified him to authorize a political warfare operation against another power, least of all in peacetime. But despite the fact that he held no official position, Sir Joseph was no stranger to the Secret Services. His role in this episode helps to cast some light on one of the more mysterious characters behind Chamberlain, whose role has been noted by some of his contemporaries, as well as being commented upon by many historians since.<sup>46</sup> What is known of his career is so meagre that it might prove useful to summarize it here. He came from a moderately prosperous if undistinguished family, and was educated at London University, where he took first-class honours before becoming a barrister in 1913. He served in the first world war, apparently in military intelligence throughout, with the rank of major, was awarded the OBE in 1919 and remained in MI6 after the war, rising to become Civil Assistant to the Director of Military Intelligence by 1921.

During the closing stages of the war, Ball came into contact with J.C.C. Davidson and Stanley Baldwin and in 1924 was invited to become head of Central Office's newly formed Intelligence

Department, which he at once renamed Publicity Department. It had been created in response to universal male franchise and the fear that 'labour' might constitute a permanent political majority. He resigned his position in military intelligence, special arrangements being made to compensate him for lost pension rights. In March 1928, he was responsible for fixing up the 'amusing if not exemplary'<sup>47</sup> deal with Donald im Thurn, the German industrialist, which allowed Baldwin to avoid parliamentary inquiries into the authenticity of the Zinoviev letter. During the following year, Ball was asked to organize the newly-formed Research Department at Central Office, where he effectively became full-time director under the political chairmanships of Lord Eustace Percy and Neville Chamberlain. One of his more remarkable achievements was that he succeeded in regularly obtaining copies of the confidential papers of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee, as well as those of Attlee's private office — quite unbeknown, of course, to the Labour Party. In April 1934, Ball proposed to Chamberlain the establishment of the National Publicity Bureau as separate from, and additional to, the Conservative Party's Central Office Publicity Department, for the purpose of creating a 'non-party' propaganda organization, for which funds might be provided by executives of joint-stock companies which regarded themselves 'as precluded from subscribing to any party organization'.<sup>48</sup> Following the 1935 election, it was generally accepted in the winning camp that the exceptionally progressive multi-media propaganda work which the vast majority of funds thus obtained helped to finance in 330 constituencies, had a decisive impact on the overall result. Ball was awarded a KBE in the 1936 Honours List.

By that time, however, he had managed to develop singularly confidential relations with Neville Chamberlain, aided perhaps by a shared interest in fly-fishing.<sup>49</sup> He was almost the only person with an official or political relationship with Chamberlain who was also a regular visitor to his home (and Chamberlain to his), and the only one with whom Chamberlain spent many hours in the solitude of the riverbank. One effect of this close relationship was that, as Chamberlain began increasingly to conduct foreign policy personally, Sir Joseph Ball began to act as his private go-between and representative alongside Sir Horace Wilson, Chamberlain's other, though this time only political, confidant. The well-known story, told by Count Grandi, about Sir Joseph acting as Chamberlain's intermediary in the negotiations which Chamberlain

was conducting behind his Foreign Secretary's back in the Anthony Eden affair, was denied by Sir Joseph before his death, though it is impossible to see why Grandi should have invented such a tale to put into an official despatch. But there is no doubt that Sir Joseph was one of the trio, with Sir Horace Wilson and Robert Hudson, whom Chamberlain sent to Berlin to conduct the highly secret negotiations for an economic 'appeasement' of Hitler in 1939,<sup>50</sup> a personal project fraught with extreme political danger.

But perhaps central to Sir Joseph's role, was the shadowy connection with the Secret Services which he seems to have maintained throughout his career, after evidently resigning to take up his party-political career. The Donald im Thurn episode was just one of several odd tales betraying continued connections. In 1937, he held secret meetings with Señor Batista y Roca, representative of the Catalonian government, arranging equally confidential opportunities for him to contact Lord Halifax, and in March 1938 he came into possession of a dossier about communist subversion in Trinidad for which he was thanked by a friend in military intelligence.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the most bizarre of these tell-tale stories was his admission during the war, in a post-prandial moment, that when, following Eden's resignation as Foreign Secretary, a group of Eden's supporters began to meet at the home of Ronald Tree MP, he had arranged for Tree's telephone to be tapped.<sup>52</sup> Given the technology of the time, that could only be done through the intelligence services which, considering the political implications, must have had complete trust in him. What perhaps clinches the argument for Sir Joseph being, and being known as, the Prime Minister's political go-between with the Secret Services and one who never, in fact, severed his relations with them, is the last position, this time official, which he held before retiring. Following a year as Head of the Films Division of the Ministry of Information, he was appointed Chairman of the Security Executive, the committee in control of MI5 and of home security matters in general. At the top, there is no division between 'intelligence' and 'propaganda', and Sir Joseph's career exemplifies this fact. He was clearly, though rather in the American manner, known to be the Prime Minister's personal agent for this area of government, and this explains why this operation, manifestly run in some way or another by the intelligence services, was conducted through him and under direct prime ministerial authority.

The decision to launch the Luxembourg operation must have been taken ultimately by Chamberlain himself. And his personal knowledge of the operation evidently gave him, if he did not have it before, an interest in developing it for future use. For the broadcasts did not cease after the Munich Crisis. On the contrary, propaganda against Germany came to be organized on an increasing scale, in accordance with the growing belief that it would be an effective way of securing Hitler's compliance with his promises, and if not, of preparing for stronger measures.

In November 1938, Major Grand of Section D invited Hilda Matheson, director of Talks and News at the BBC, 1926-1932, to consider 'the possibilities of "external broadcasting" (i.e. broadcasting from stations outside Britain, primarily to Germany but also to any other countries which proved available)<sup>53</sup>. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office continued to examine the possibilities from its own point of view. As Lord Halifax pointed out to the Cabinet in December 1938:<sup>54</sup>

The programmes would be sponsored in the normal way by a commercial firm such as a travel agency and would contain a general news review amongst other items. A specimen copy of such a review had been prepared. The cost of six programmes a week for three months put out by one or other of these three stations (i.e. Luxembourg, Strasbourg and Liechtenstein) which normally broadcast in German is estimated at £6,000. The programmes would be submitted to the Foreign Office in advance and careful watch would be kept over them. Any participation by the British government in these programmes could effectively be concealed.

At the Cabinet meeting to discuss these proposals on 14 December, Chamberlain stated that his speech to the Foreign Press Association the previous night 'had been specially relayed from the Luxembourg station'.<sup>55</sup> This was a curious admission. Who had been responsible for the arrangement? The Foreign Office was still at the stage of submitting its proposals for approval, including financial sanction which was eventually granted on 21 December.<sup>56</sup> Miss Matheson had yet to start her investigations for Major Grand. Presumably, we are back with Sir Joseph Ball and Wellesley's activities at MI6. In the discussions, Chamberlain also emphasized that he 'attached great importance to the broadcasts from the Luxembourg station which reached the popular sets in Germany'.<sup>57</sup>

The Committee on Overseas Broadcasting under Inskip, now Dominions Secretary, reconvened for its seventh meeting on 2

February 1939. Vansittart, who for the past year had been coordinating the government's peacetime propaganda overseas, explained the Foreign Office's special interest in the Luxembourg broadcasts, which 'constituted an entirely new development. The Prime Minister had taken a great interest in it and had directed that every effort should be made to get the British point of view into Germany by wireless and that the possibility of making use of such stations as Luxembourg, Strasbourg and Liechtenstein etc. should be examined. With the approval of the Cabinet, plans had been laid for getting suitable material regularly broadcast from Luxembourg.'<sup>58</sup> He did not feel that the 'exceptional circumstances' of the Munich Crisis had ended: 'There was no doubt that we were in the presence of a continuing crisis and it was our duty by every means that came to our hand to convey the truth to the people of Germany'. The Post Office recognized the value of the Luxembourg experiment and no longer pressed its initial objections to sponsored broadcasting from that station. However, it was unenthusiastic to see the project extended to Strasbourg or Liechtenstein, because of the dangers of this work becoming publicly known, which in turn might cause the Luxembourg authorities to take fright. 'Once the fact leaked out that they had become instruments of British propaganda, the whole virtue of our foreign broadcasting policy would be gone.'<sup>59</sup>

Major Grand attended this meeting, but there is no record of his saying anything. Perhaps he was waiting for the results of Hilda Matheson's investigations. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office received reports from the Berlin Chancery concerning the impact of the broadcasts in Germany. One German journalist, for example, wrote:<sup>60</sup>

For some time now the British wireless has been causing a stir with its news service in German, and it is obviously trying to polish up the tarnished democratic escutcheons of Brothers Luxembourg and Strasbourg. Since the English voice, and this we frankly admit, sounds more truthful even when it is speaking in German, and since at the outset the news service was also more ingenious than its liberal relatives, great hopes were very likely set on its propagandistic efficacy.

But, he continued, the stations had defeated their own ends 'by sending lies and nothing but lies, and in Germany these stations are only tuned in from time to time in order to hear what particular lies are being circulated in the world at a given moment'. The German

minister in Luxembourg also protested to the government of the Grand Duchy, once after the initial broadcast of 27 September 1938 and again in April 1939 after the transmission of a broadcast in German on the Italian occupation of Albania.<sup>61</sup> The British Ambassador in Germany, Sir Neville Henderson, also reported 'that the effectiveness of the broadcasting in German of accurate information regarding the views of HMG and the British outlook on the international situation might well in time of crisis make the difference between peace and war'.<sup>62</sup> The object of the broadcasts was clear. As a Foreign Office note records: 'Objective: — To divide German popular opinion from Hitler'.<sup>63</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said therefore, that according to the terminology of the statements made about the international uses of broadcasting by the British government — in the International Union of Broadcasting, in the League of Nations during the drafting of the Convention and in Parliament — the Luxembourg operation was indeed 'an improper use of broadcasting'. In the sense in which the Secret Services' propaganda activities 'handled the unavowable', it was also an 'inadmissible act'. Did it succeed? It certainly failed to divide German opinion over Hitler. Its only known effect was to have been noticed in Berlin, which thought it necessary to protest to Luxembourg about it. Was it then a mistake to launch it altogether? It marked a new stage and a new willingness to take on Hitler on his terms, despite the risks of what he might do in retaliation — and with luck it might have helped to signify that new-found determination to Berlin. It came too late, as did other measures designed to warn him off — assuming that there was anything which would deter him — and that it failed in that sense too, the sequel to Munich proves beyond doubt. But on the other hand, Britain got away with it. The Germans created no incident over it; in fact, their response was altogether encouraging to this application of a dose of their own medicine, however small. It *was* worth trying.

### Notes

1. Anthony Adamthwaite, 'The British Government and the Media, 1937-1938', *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, 2 (April 1983), 281-97.

2. *Memorandum by G.W. of Special Broadcasting Arrangements — September 27th-30th, 1938*, Birmingham University Library, Chamberlain Papers, NC Add. 14.

3. Adamthwaite, op. cit., 283.

4. *Ibid.*, 285.

5. *Ibid.*, 287.

6. 'All factors for the formation of public opinion of both countries shall serve the purpose of re-establishing normal and friendly relations . . . both parties pledge themselves immediately to renounce any aggressive utilisation of radio . . . against the other party . . .' Agreement between Austria and Germany, 11 July 1936, Clause II. Similar agreements were made in respect of German-Polish relations. Hitler's view that radio was 'the most terrible weapon in the hands of those who know how to use it' was widely known and so, of course, were Goebbels' pronouncements on the subject. As late as 19 September 1938, just one week before this operation was launched against Germany, the Cabinet received a memorandum, *Propaganda in Germany: The Dissemination of Ideas among the German People to Weaken their Fighting Power in War*, which emphasized that the Nazi government had always regarded propaganda as a straightforward weapon of war and that 'its leaders have unlimited faith in the power of propaganda, which increases their fear of it as a potential weapon against themselves'. *Cabinet Papers*, CAB 16/127, MIC 14.

7. Here too, as recently as June 1938, the Cabinet Committee under Sir Thomas Inskip, established for considering the question of foreign-language broadcasts, was reminded of the whole of this resolution and this clause was actually quoted. CAB 23/94 29 (38) 10. See also Briggs, op. cit., 360.

8. Article 1, League Convention *Concerning the Use of International Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace*, September 1936. It came into force on 1 April 1938. For a discussion of the evolution of the Convention, see P.M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain* (Cambridge 1981), 190.

9. Major Astor, a member of both Royal Commissions on Broadcasting, gave the official British understanding of this Clause in Parliament as 'no country should in the language of another broadcast matter which was not acceptable to that country and contrary to its wishes' — a precise description of just what the Luxembourg broadcasts did do. *The Times*, 30 April 1936, 9.

10. The Seventh Duke of Wellington (Gerald Wellesley succeeded to the title in 1943) recalled this remark when consenting to deposit this Memorandum in the Chamberlain Papers. Information Dr. B.S. Benedikz.

11. 3rd Meeting of the Arabic Broadcasting Committee, 4 October 1937. CAB 27/641 ABC (37).

12. See Asa Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless* (London 1965) and P.M. Taylor op. cit., for details and extended discussion.

13. Memorandum by the Postmaster General, 'Advertisement Broadcasting', June 1937. CAB 24/29 CP 133 (39).

14. CAB 23/94, 29 (39) 10.

15. King-Hall to Tallents, 5 September 1938. FO 808/2.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Briggs, op. cit., 645.

18. For the evolution of these plans and these three organizations concerned, see C. Cruikshank, *The Fourth Arm: Psychological Warfare 1938-1945* (London 1977), Ch. 1; M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France* (London 1960), 2-7; Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-1945* (London 1979), 89-91 and P.M. Taylor, 'If War



Should Come: Preparing the Fifth Arm for Total War, 1935-1939', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16, 1 (January 1981), 27-51.

19. Major Lawrence Grand, Head of Section D, informed the Secretary of the CID sub-committee in charge of co-ordinating the planning of the Ministry of Information on 5 October 1938, that he had plans for four types of propaganda activity: 'a) Broadcasting: by broadcasting outside this country, e.g. Luxembourg...'. A.P. Ryan to Stephen Tallents, FO 898/1.

20. For Radio Luxembourg see Briggs, *op. cit.*, Ch. 4, Europe, Cooperation and Competition, which presents the BBC's view. For the other side, see Richard Nichols, *Radio Luxembourg The Station of the Stars* (London 1983). There is little difference in the facts which appear in both books, but, of course, Nichols is both more up-to-date and more centrally concerned with Radio Luxembourg. The account here follows Nichols, with cross reference to Briggs confined to points of divergence.

21. Lord Asa Briggs remarked that the evolution of 'few other institutions reveal[s] more clearly the differences between national traditions, national ways of life and national policies'. (Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* [London 1961], 26.) It should have been added, 'dominant in a particular period'. It is curious how, in historical discussions of the British policy response to the arrival of broadcasting, there seems no recognition of the fact that the unique approach adopted in Britain only lasted for a very short time. By 1938, the Foreign Office had instructed the BBC to stop pressing the 'public service, no commercialism' line on the International Broadcasting Union, adopted in 1924, and in 1954, with the establishment of Independent Television, commercially funded and regionally based, the twin principles of non-commercial funding and 'a single national voice' had been abandoned. Although it took another twenty years before Britain acquired a pluralistic broadcasting system, with a large number of regionally based and commercially funded local radio stations in addition to some national networks as pioneered in the USA, the ideal, which had always baffled Europeans and Americans alike, of confining broadcasting to a public corporation in the name of 'integrating democracy' and seeking to create a single national voice for the better functioning of a democracy — which presumably has something to do with pluralism rather than totalitarianism — had, in fact, merely held up the development in Britain of the normal pattern and did so for less than a single generation.

22. Captain Plugge divided his time between a splendid Mediterranean yacht, a touring car, both fitted with what must have been one of the first 'portable' radios, and the London social scene, where his presence was regularly noted in *The Times*. In 1935 he became MP for Rochester/Chatham and in his first, and only, substantial speech — an extended question in fact — he attacked the blindness of the government in being unable to see the possibilities offered by pushing British ideals through non-British radio stations. He began, 'As the person who had initiated the first transmissions from an overseas station...', *The Times*, 30 April 1936, 8.

23. Société d'Etudes Radiophoniques SA, founded in 1929. Nichols, *op. cit.*, 13.

24. *Ibid.* To cover the territory of the Duchy, 4-KW would have been sufficient: the provision in the Ducal Charter stipulating that the concessionaires should build a 100-KW minimum power station made it perfectly clear that it was the desire of the government of the Duchy to create an international station on its soil. The largest shareholder was the Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion (CLR), followed by the Banque de Paris et Pays-Bas. Nichols, *ibid.*

25. The representative of Radio Paris and the French 'national' system on the

International Broadcasting Union, R. Tabouis, offered the British, while the Station was still being built, joint control, in effect, over it as a solution to the vehement British opposition to it, pointing to the 'utility of Radio Luxembourg as a neutral and impartial station'. Alas, this sensibly Gallic proposal for a deal over what was obviously going to be a powerful propaganda 'utility' went to Vice Admiral Carpendale, Deputy Director General under Reith, instead of someone like Vansittart. With sublime blindness to the real point, Carpendale rejected the offer, telling Tabouis that Luxembourg could not genuinely be an 'international neutral post' unless it was managed by a 'non-commercial and truly international committee'. The French might well have thought that the British must be living on another planet. Briggs, *Golden Age*. . . , 355. On the French side, it was Pierre Laval, then Minister of the Interior, who seems to have handled the matter of getting Luxembourg under French control.

26. 'He has succeeded in agreement with the French Government in founding the most powerful station in Europe to be situated in Luxembourg, under absolute control of France.' *Journal Officiel*, quoted in Briggs, *ibid.*, 354 and Nichols, *op. cit.*, 31.

27. Nichols, *ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, 47. Briggs, *op. cit.*, 364, gives 50 per cent. These figures need to be taken as approximations, since the techniques of audience research were still in their infancy.

29. T.J. Hollins, 'The Conservative Party and Film Propaganda Between the Wars', *English Historical Review* 96 (1981), 367.

30. Nichols, *op. cit.*, 33.

31. *Ibid.*, 37.

32. *Ibid.*, 39.

33. *All England Law Reports* 1936, vol. 2, 721 et seq., 2 May 1936, Chancery Division. The submission by Counsel for International Broadcasting Company makes it clear that Radio Publicity Ltd. mentioned in Briggs, *op. cit.*, 312, was in fact a British subsidiary of International Broadcasting Company.

34. Nichols, *op. cit.*, 43.

35. The first Scale of Rates was published on 1 August 1936, describing Wireless Publicity Ltd. as 'sole agents for the United Kingdom'.

36. Quoted in Nichols, *op. cit.*, 42.

37. *Ibid.*, 44.

38. Memorandum by H. Noble Hall, 28 February 1939, 'Note on Radio Luxembourg', enclosed in E. Phipps to Lord Halifax, 6 March 1939. FO 395/626, P 781/6/150.

39. For 'The Red Network' — undersea cables which only surface on territories marked red on the map, i.e. British possessions, thus ensuring that no-one else can interfere or listen into them — see P.M. Kennedy, 'Imperial Cable Communications and Strategy 1870-1914', *English Historical Review* 86 (1971), 728-52. See also J. Saxon Mills, *The Press and Communications of the Empire* (London 1924).

40. Foot, *op. cit.*, 2.

41. M.L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the First World War 1914-1918* (Cambridge 1983), 52-53.

42. Radio Luxembourg was used by the Psychological Warfare Section of SHAEF 1944-46; some form of inter-allied, later NATO, supervision and use for cold-war purposes had been established before it was handed back, but details are not known.

Influence commercially over the station thus became of no importance. Owing to austerity and strict control of foreign currency expenditure, British advertising was minimal. Once the barriers were removed, Wireless Publicity Ltd. was wound up as a trade name and replaced by Radio Luxembourg, London, Ltd. Nichols, op. cit., 83.

43. See P.M. Taylor, 'If War Should Come', op. cit.

44. John Baker White, *The Big Lie* (George Man Edition, London 1973), 48-50. Baker White's own career exemplifies the inextricable connection at bottom between intelligence and propaganda, in his case inside the shadowy world of private organizations which grew up in the wake of the war-propaganda and communist agitation, some of which were covers for 'official' secret service work, while others were entirely privately funded and ploughed their own furrow, and the majority of which were somewhere in between. A good example of this kind of organization was 'Section D', which came into being in 1923 to combat Bolshevik subversive propaganda and moved on to carry the good fight against the 'Nazi fifth column' (12). By 1938 at the latest, it was directed by John Baker White, and worked by infiltrating agents into both fascistoid and communist propaganda organizations, supplying valuable information to MI5, as well as the Deuxième Bureau, and ran its own 'white' propaganda operation under cover of the 'Economic League'. In 1938, Baker White, presumably together with the services of his 'Section D', was recruited by 'EH' — the engagement interview being conducted by a trio consisting of Rex Leeper of the Foreign Office, Major Dallas Brook 'of the War Office' and Robert Bruce Lockhart, then apparently holding no official position. After this and his work for the DMI's radio propaganda until it was moved to the Political Warfare Executive, Baker White went on to work in the Eastern Mediterranean theatre of war and in the Political Warfare Section, specializing in deception campaigns and ending the war a Lieutenant Colonel.

45. Nigel Nicolson (ed.), *Harold Nicolson Diaries and Letters* vol. 2, 262, note 2 and vol. 3, 140. It is odd that despite such extremely affectionate references, there is in fact nothing recorded of Wellesley's activities or opinions. Even where Nicolson describes a luncheon with Chamberlain, Churchill, Wellesley and himself involving a heated political discussion, there is no record of Wellesley's contribution — if any.

46. For Sir Joseph Ball see J. Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin* (London 1978), 192-98, remarking on how Chamberlain relied on Sir Joseph's advice; F. Thorpe and N. Pronay, *British Official Films in The Second World War* (London 1980), 25-34; A. Beichman, 'Hugger Muggger in Old Queen Street', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15, 4 (October 1978), 671-88; R.R. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative* (London 1969), containing much fascinating, though also cryptic, detail of Sir Joseph's work and character, including his 'intelligence' exploits concerning the confidential papers of the Labour Party which put Watergate into the small-beer category; and T.J. Hollins, *The Presentation of Politics. The Place of Party Publicity, Broadcasting and Film in British Politics*, Leeds University unpublished PhD. Dissertation. In Appendix A the author lists the main references to what has been said about him in current historical literature, and discusses the evidence which survives of him in the archives of the Conservative Party. Dr. Hollins' conclusion is that he both deserved and revelled in his reputation as a sinister and conspiratorial figure deeply involved all through with the Secret Services. Sir Joseph announced just before his death in 1961 that he had personally burnt all his papers in preparation for it — there have been subsequent rumours, characteristically, that he had not in fact done so.

47. K. Middlemas and J. Barnes, *Baldwin* (London 1969), 362-63.

48. Memorandum by Sir Joseph Ball to the Prime Minister, June 1938. Chamberlain Papers NC8/21/8, partly quoted in Hollins, *op. cit.*, 36. In a letter to another of his closer associates, Lord Weir, Chamberlain reported on the development of the plans for the National Publicity Bureau, 'The great "façade" will make further progress on Monday next . . . etc.' NC7/11/27/38. 11 May 1934.

49. There are a number of private letters from Sir Joseph Ball to Chamberlain which help to shed light on the man as well as his relationship to Chamberlain: they normally manage to work in their mutual love of the sport as well as a heavy mixture of flattery and expressions of devotion on Ball's part. A rank example is NC7/11/32/8, sent 22 December 1939. It begins, 'I have managed to secure a small Christmas gift, a copy of one of Hereford's books about the development and use of his pattern of dry flies', goes on to a page of flattery and concludes, 'Our position today is unassailable. It is indeed immense throughout the whole world. I shudder to think how much depends upon you personally. May you be given health and strength . . . etc'. Little wonder that one of Sir Joseph's colleagues in the Research Department principally remembered him as a man who knew how to make friends at the top fast. Hollins, *op. cit.*, 34.

50. Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler. British Politics and British Policy 1933-1939* (London and Chicago 1975, paperback edition), 300.

51. Hollins, *op. cit.* 36 and 110.

52. Ronald Tree, *When The Moon Was High* (London 1975), 76.

53. Note by Hilda Matheson, 24 August 1939. T162/858, E39140/4.

54. Memorandum by Lord Halifax, 'British Propaganda in Germany', 8 December 1938. CAB 24/281, CP 284 (38).

55. CAB 23/96, 59 (38) 5.

56. CAB 23/96, 60 (38) 3.

57. *Ibid.*

58. CAB 27/641, ABC (37), 7th meeting.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Berlin Chancery to News Department, 10 March 1939. FO 395/626, P 920/6/150.

61. H. Noble Hall to Lord Lloyd, 3 May 1939. FO 395/628/1869/6/150.

62. Foreign Office memorandum, 'Government policy on broadcasting in English by Foreign Stations', 23 January 1939. CAB 27/641, ABC (37) 24.

63. Note on broadcasts to Germany, undated, unsigned. CO 395/630, P 2966/6/150.

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